



ARCTIC INDIGENOUS
WELLNESS FOUNDATION

2018 Annual Report

Submitted by Donald Prince, Executive Director/CEO

Approved by Dr. Nicole Redvers, ND, Board Chair



Contents

Partners

We are proud and grateful to partner with the following individuals and programs:

- Director, Child Family and Community Wellness NTHSSA
- Manager, Child and Family Services NTHSSA-YK
- Manager, Territorial Mental Health and Addictions
- Manager, Community Mental Health and Adult Services NTHSSA-YK
- Supervisor, Community Mental Health and Adult Services NTHSSA-YK
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police Representative
- Tree of Peace, Manager
- Integrated Case Management Manager/Supervisor
- Salvation Army Program Manager
- Centre for Northern Families Executive Director
- Safe Harbor/Sobering Centre Executive Director
- YK Dene Community Wellness Program Manager
- Stanton Territorial Hospital, Psychiatric Manager/Clinical Coordinator
- Manager, Mental Health and Addictions, DHSS
- Addictions Representative, DHSS
- Side Door Executive Director
- Justice: Corrections Representative
- Justice: Community Representative
- Non-Insured Health Benefits Policy Manager



Who We Are

(Clockwise from back-left) Board members Jean Erasmus, Edna Elias, Rassi Nashalik, Magnolia A. R. Unka-Wool, Thomsen D'Hont, Francois Paulette, Nicole Redvers, Be'sha Blondin, Elder Advisor Marie Adele Rabesca

**We are deeply grateful
for the help of the
following individuals
who have helped us in
our vision of providing
services to people in the
Northwest Territories
and Nunavut:**

Mason White, MRAIC Associate Professor
*John H Daniels Faculty of Architecture,
Landscape & Design
University of Toronto*

Garth Wallbridge, Lawyer,
Yellowknife

Lindsey Oosenbrug-Trinh
*Priorities and Planning Analyst
Office of Priorities and Planning
Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Government of the Northwest Territories*
Glen Abernethy
Minister of Health and Social Services

Paul Emingak
*Executive Director
Kitikmeot Inuit Association
P.O. Box 18
Cambridge Bay, Nunavut*

Steve Versteeg
*Manager, Projects and Programs
Community Justice & Policing
Government of the Northwest Territories*

Marie Doyle, Director-Northern Region
*First Nations and Inuit Health Branch
Indigenous Services Canada*

Brian Jasper
*Family Preservation Worker
Child and Family Services
Northwest Territories Health and Social Services
Authority – Yellowknife Region*

Miriam Wideman
*Health Promotion Specialist, Tobacco
Indigenous Health and Community Wellness
Division
Department of Health and Social Services
Government of the Northwest Territories*

Former Chief Roy Fabian
K'at'l'odeeche First Nation

Rachel MacNeill, Hotì ts'eeda
*Communications and Knowledge Translation
Advisor*

Simon Taylor NWTAA, OAA, MRAIC
Taylor Architecture Group

Sheila Bassi-Kellett, City Administrator,
Nalini Naidoo A/City Administrator
City of Yellowknife

Melissa Chung, LSW
*Case Manager
Specialized Courts
Department of Justice
Government of the Northwest Territories*

Sabrina Broadhead, Director
*Indigenous Health and Community Wellness
GNWT Health & Social Services*

RJ Carr, Policy Manager
*Northern Region
First Nations and Inuit Health Branch
Indigenous Services Canada*

Tucked away at the edge of town, hidden amongst the trees from those who are not seeking its sanctuary, stands a small camp of four tents and a large teepee. Though well within the city limits of Yellowknife, the sounds of street noise fade into the rush of the breeze through the branches. The only sights and smells are those of the bush rock damp from the melting snow, earth softening with the warmth of springtime sun, and the smoke from the fire in the central tent spiraling up towards the clouds.

This is a safe place.

This is a healing place.

This is the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation.



In April 2018, we began clearing the two-feet of snow from the area that would become the urban land camp. Beginning with space for two tents and a teepee, we hauled in piles and piles of building supplies. The City of Yellowknife

provided us with the lease on the camp property, signs, gravel for trails, and public notices about our camp.

We had our grand opening on April 26th and officially opened for operations on May 2nd.





Vision

The Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation (AIWF) has brought together in a symbolic self-determined union, the Inuit, Dene, and Métis, with the mandate of culturally reviving traditional healing services and practices in Canada's north. AIWF is a non-profit charity organization dedicated to improving traditional and culturally based health care for Indigenous northerners facing a high burden of disease and unequal access to traditional health services. AIWF is committed to working with patients, health workers, researchers, and policymakers to ensure equal access for all northerners to traditionally based quality wellness services.

AIWF was launched by a group of Indigenous lead Elders representing the Dene, Inuit, and Métis people in the north as a humanitarian response to the dire statistics in First Nations and Inuit health. It has long been known that Indigenous people in Canada, including in the northern regions, suffer disproportionately from cancer, diabetes, addictions, suicide, and autoimmune conditions, in addition to higher rates of homelessness, unemployment, and food insecurity. A sense of urgency among the Elders of the north to pass down their long-standing healing traditions, which are on the brink of extinction, has prompted the development of a formal strategy and structure to ensure the next generation of Indigenous people are as healthy and happy as their ancestors.

Our Approach

AIWF prides itself on ensuring community-determined priorities are actioned with the community members themselves (“nothing about us without us”). Community-designed interventions delivered by local people ensure programs are reflective of the cultural context of the land. We strive to ensure that we use local skill for both healing and knowledge translation as our peoples are the most knowledgeable of the needs of their communities.

Our cultures are at the forefront of what we do. All lessons, medicine, and healing are related to our language and our traditions. We teach as we heal, explaining everything we do as we do it, and using our language to name our medicines, places, feelings and kinship. This is more than just words; we also describe how we relate to one another. We treat our clients by coming alongside them, in our way, and helping them to find healing and peace.

Our Elders know their history, culture and language. We can explain and teach the names of the plants and animals we use; we can share the stories that are a part of our collective history; we can transmit and uplift our culture and our way of life among all the people we are in contact with. To ensure that we are meeting the cultural needs of all our participants, our work on the urban land camp has evolved to include an Inuit traditional counselor, as of the end of last year.

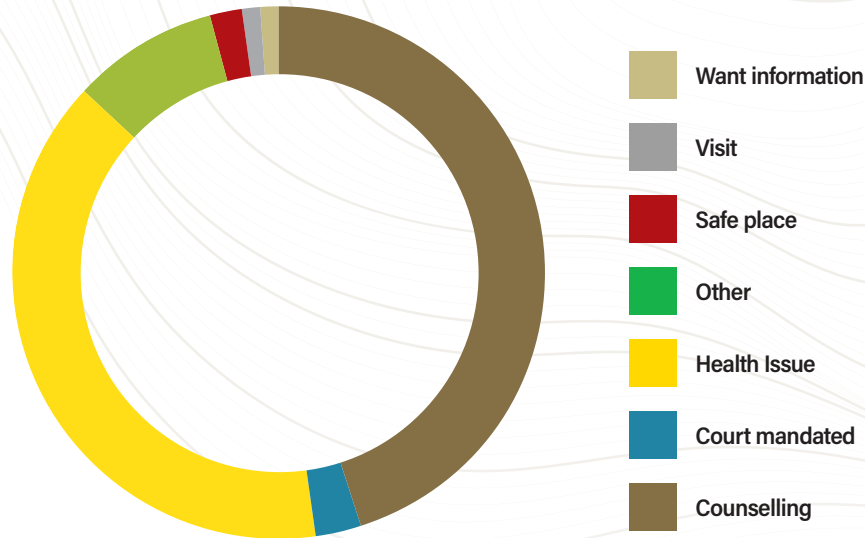
Our Reach

By the end of February 2019, AIWF has engaged with over 1,700 people. Most have come to the camp directly, but our staff also strives to meet people where they are. Whether that means visiting them in homes or shelters or going to Stanton Territorial Hospital, we ensure that people who express a desire to seek healing are seen. Ten percent of clients were drawn to the Wellness Camp by Outreach activities, one percent were Court Mandated to visit. Clients visited the Wellness Camp for many reasons, and 25 percent of clients would participate in more than one type of activity when visiting. Most of our clients (at least 72 percent) are Indigenous people: 61 percent self-identified as Dene, 6 percent as Métis, 4 percent as Inuit

and 1 percent as Inuvialuit (see Appendix for more detailed information). Both men and women accessed the camp at nearly equal rates (see Appendix). Our visitors are primarily from the NWT but come from many different communities.

We have worked with many marginalized people, including those suffering from homelessness and those in correctional facilities. In collaboration with corrections officers and Elders from the local jail, we have been able to bring inmates out to our camp to help gather wood, shovel snow and meet with counselors and Elders. They also participate in the traditional sweat lodge. Staff from the Psychiatry department at Stanton Territorial Hospital bring patients out to the camp on a weekly basis. Clients from the Women's Shelter and Drop-in Center come to the camp on a regular basis.

Reason for Client Visit



We have also provided traditional counseling for many residential school survivors or their descendants. These counseling sessions have a broad focus, encompassing grief and loss, anger, depression, family and relationships.

We have met with Government Health Departments, the Northwest Territories Recreation and Parks Association, Tlicho Community Services, Stanton Hospital physicians, wellness workers and psychiatry staff, college staff and students to discuss traditional healing and medicines. Many groups

schools, government departments, service agencies visit the camp and we teach our culture to them, regardless of religion, race or worldview. We have held courses with Aurora College classes of social work, nursing, and early childhood education. These students visit our camp on a regular basis, learn from us, eat traditional food. They have the opportunities to talk through their struggles with one-on-one counseling and sharing circles. We have also presented to the Deputy Minister of First Nations Inuit Health when they came to the camp to see how they could support what we are doing.

We hosted the head of the Canadian Medical Association and her brigade at the camp last month, along with the head of Canadian Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) and the NWT Medical Association; we had a great discussion about bridging systems of medicine and teaching in healthcare.

We are grateful for the many opportunities we have had to present our program and experiences to others to share our story. Our Elders have travelled to other communities from all areas of the NWT to share knowledge about traditional medicines, tobacco teachings, and protocols for teaching others so that our people's wisdom can live on through future generations and keep our communities healthy. Our Board Member Magnolia Unka-Wool participated in the Hotii ts'eeda 2018 Elèts'ehdèe Arctic Inspiration Panel: Celebrating Research and Program Excellence. She did a presentation on what we do, who we are and how we work with people and communities. Our Elders spent a day talking and sharing with the Workers Safety Commission about culture, ceremonies, and protocols. We presented to the GNWT Adoption Social Work team on the history of residential schools and the sixties scoop. Our Executive Director attended the Arctic Net conference in Ottawa.

We also held a presentation at the Prince Wales Museum for the NWT branch of the Institute of Public Administration Canada (IPAC). This broader talk was attended by public servants, scholars, students and others with an interest in public policy. We spoke through the lens of asking: How do we translate what we know about the benefits of nature- and land-based wellness activities to government action? What are the implications for policy-makers, decision-makers, and other relevant stakeholders? How can civil servants incorporate this knowledge into their practice? All who attended expressed great interest in bringing these ideas and knowledge into their work.

Our Events & Programming

Our programming delivers services to all ages, genders and social groups, allowing us to extend our reach further into our community.

We hold community sweat lodges every two weeks. Typically, anywhere from ten to eighteen people attend, mostly men and women but also youth and children at times. The sweat lodge provides an opportunity for people to connect connect with others, connect with tradition, and, most importantly, connect with themselves. Similarly, in the Fall, we held a fast for some community members who wanted to work on personal healing and growth. We held another

fast in the spring on April 17th-21st for the same purpose. Many people came out and supported these individuals.

Beginning in September of 2018, we have hosted social events and feasts for the community every month. We cook traditional food and provide refreshments. To date, nearly six hundred community members have come out to these events, and many people volunteer to help with food and entertainment. There is drumming, singing, guitar, stories, traditional crafts, contests and always a great deal of laughter. Those who attend often mention the positive impact these events have had on them and their families. In several ways, these gatherings mirror our communities old customs of coming together, in the old days before the devastation of colonialism.

Much of our work centers around youth and encouraging the next generation. We have regular programs at our camp with the Tree of Peace, Aurora College students, youth camp students, and the YK1 school division. We had forty kids from British Columbia and the Northwest Territories out on the camp for a weekend for programming and drum-making. We also often host foster parents and their children to help immerse the families in traditional practices and culture. Last year, we helped facilitate a canoe trip down the DehCho River with eleven youth, seven elders and a

traditional counselor from AIWF. The nine-day trip was spent learning about the river, telling stories, teaching about our spirituality, and sharing language. The AIWF traditional counselor provided mental health support for the group.

As we came to recognize new gaps, we developed training programs to meet those community needs. We made visits to outlying areas to share knowledge and facilitate traditional medicine workshops. The five-day session we held in Hay River was attended by twenty-five participants. We held community sessions on death and dying, and how our people handle this phase of life traditionally and culturally. Over sixty people from the area attended. We also are working on an agreement with GNWT Health and Social Services to provide training for their staff on Indigenous culture, ways of living, and how-to best work with Indigenous families.

Our Stories

These stories have been shared by people who came to the camp and wanted their stories to be told

Walking alongside our visitors in their healing process, we have seen many people make incredible change in their lives. One man came to the camp feeling suicidal. He talked with one of our Elders, then checked himself into the psychiatric ward. He started getting passes from the ward to come out to our camp and he came every day for three weeks. He spoke with us about his problems and we were able to help him deal with some life-long issues. He is now living in the community in his own place and doing quite well. He still comes out to the camp regularly.

Another man is now sober and went for addictions treatment in Alberta. An additional client also went to treatment, came back and has since moved to Edmonton to attend college; he is doing quite well. Another person came to the camp with suicidal thoughts; talked with a counselor and together they made a plan to go to a treatment center for trauma. Person went to treatment and returned, freed from a past that had haunted for so long. Another person was in the psychiatric ward and began coming to camp every day on a pass for a month. He was able to connect with his culture and identity, and he has since been released from the hospital and is doing well on his own.

One man had been coming to camp for over eight months. He had struggled with addiction for a long time, but over the course of those months he stayed sober. We arranged for him to go to a treatment center, and when he came back, he secured a place to live in addition to stable employment. Most importantly, he restored connections to his family and community. Unfortunately, he passed away from a stroke, but in his final moments, he slipped out of this world sober, surrounded by family and friends.

This was written by an adult who accompanied youth from BC to our camp for a weekend:

"[I came with] the student group that visited you making drums at your place of wellness on the 2nd and 3rd of March. I wanted to send your group a personal email from me. I hope that is ok. I feel so very fortunate to have met the four of you and I hear your words of encouragement, love, blessing and knowledge in my head still and I hope for a long time to come. Thank you for sharing your world with us...with me. I was so touched and moved to tears a few times by emotions that welled up from the energy and words expressed. Your culture and ways are truly beautiful, and I wish the rest of the world would be as open and free to be who they are and express themselves. I think we would all be in a better place. We all REALLY loved our drums and carried them proudly onto the plane. I am so proud to not only have a drum but to have made it and learned a traditional

method as well. It, for me anyway, was intentional and healing, and that drum will always hold those days for me. Thank you again for doing all you do, the four of you are exactly where you should be. Your gift for healing, honesty and your gentleness pours through your energy. I think your centre for wellness provides a very safe place for those who need you and the land also has beautiful energy, it lifts you up. You provide a cultural experience that is so important. I am glad that Indigenous healing will be kept alive through your group. Keep it going and keep teaching. Make sure the others read this email as well. We adults that accompanied the kids feel we were amongst famous people. You're all so talented and you should be proud of how your lives have carried you to this place of being. Thank you again, I hope this email is not too forward, I speak from my heart."

Our Reflections

We are proud of what we have accomplished. We have created a space where people know they can go at any time and be treated with respect and care. No matter the reason whether it be to talk, hang out, drink some coffee or tea, have something to eat, make a drum, sew, chop wood, listen to Elders, talk with Elders, receive counseling, or even just to escape the city for a while they will be welcomed. Here they can come at any time and have us there to see them and spend time with them. Today, there are seven of the previously most at-risk men who are sober because they started coming to our camp. Many of them sought treatment for their addictions, have come back and are now continuing to do well. This is in addition to the hundreds of others who have sought and found help through the camp.

We believe our model will continue to help inform the broader academic community as well. We have had two academic papers published in international journals. Our Board President also published her book, *The Science of the Sacred*, in March of this year. By sharing our experiences and knowledge, we hope that others will come to appreciate our program and what we have achieved through dedication to our vision and community.



Looking ahead...

We are very excited about the future of AIWF and all that is yet to come. Awareness of our work and our success is growing. Increasingly, people from a wide variety of organizations are recognizing the beauty and efficacy of the model we have established and are seeking to align themselves with our efforts. We have had meetings with the Justice Department and Government of the Northwest Territories regarding Wellness Courts, Diversion Court, Victim Services, and the Correctional Center, in addition to the Dene Wellness Program for using our staff to help the people they serve. As there is no traditional counseling service in the NWT, we are very much needed here. We will be hosting group sessions and one-on-one counseling sessions for their clients at our healing camp. We are currently in the process of developing training sessions with the GNWT Child and Family Health Services Department to educate foster parents and GNWT social workers on Indigenous ways of knowing and living as part of a requirement for the program. We have also been invited to the Addiction Management Community Group for Yellowknife. The purpose of this group is to bring together organizations in the Yellowknife Region working with people impacted by addictions and provide a forum for suggesting ways existing services can improve clients' quality of life.

People from across the Northwest Territories have come to us asking for advice on how they could set up a camp like ours. Our culture, medicines and teachings need to be shared and taught; we see the need to have a structured process for this, so along the way, we have also become teachers, gradually extending our reach. We have done community outreach across the territory to get similar programs running. We will co-host a training session for all land-based workers for the purpose of advancing the capacity of cultural camps to incorporate healing components. It is our hope that many more programs and camps like ours will be developed to reach more people. We are working with the K'atlodeeche First Nation to develop a wellness worker and traditional healer program for our people. K'atlodeeche has received funding from the federal government to bring people together from across the NWT to attend two sessions of teaching, sharing knowledge, and healing from past traumas. Within these sessions, we are working to develop a Heal the Healers program. In this program, we will support Elders to become facilitators and teachers to our people.

As part of our larger vision for AIWF, we are looking broadly at problems to help generate solutions involving many agencies and levels of government in lasting relationships. We have met with the City of Yellowknife Indigenous Liaison to discuss how the city could be more

accommodating and receptive to the needs and knowledge of the Indigenous population. As the city moves forwards with reconciliation efforts, we hope that this will be a mutually beneficial relationship.

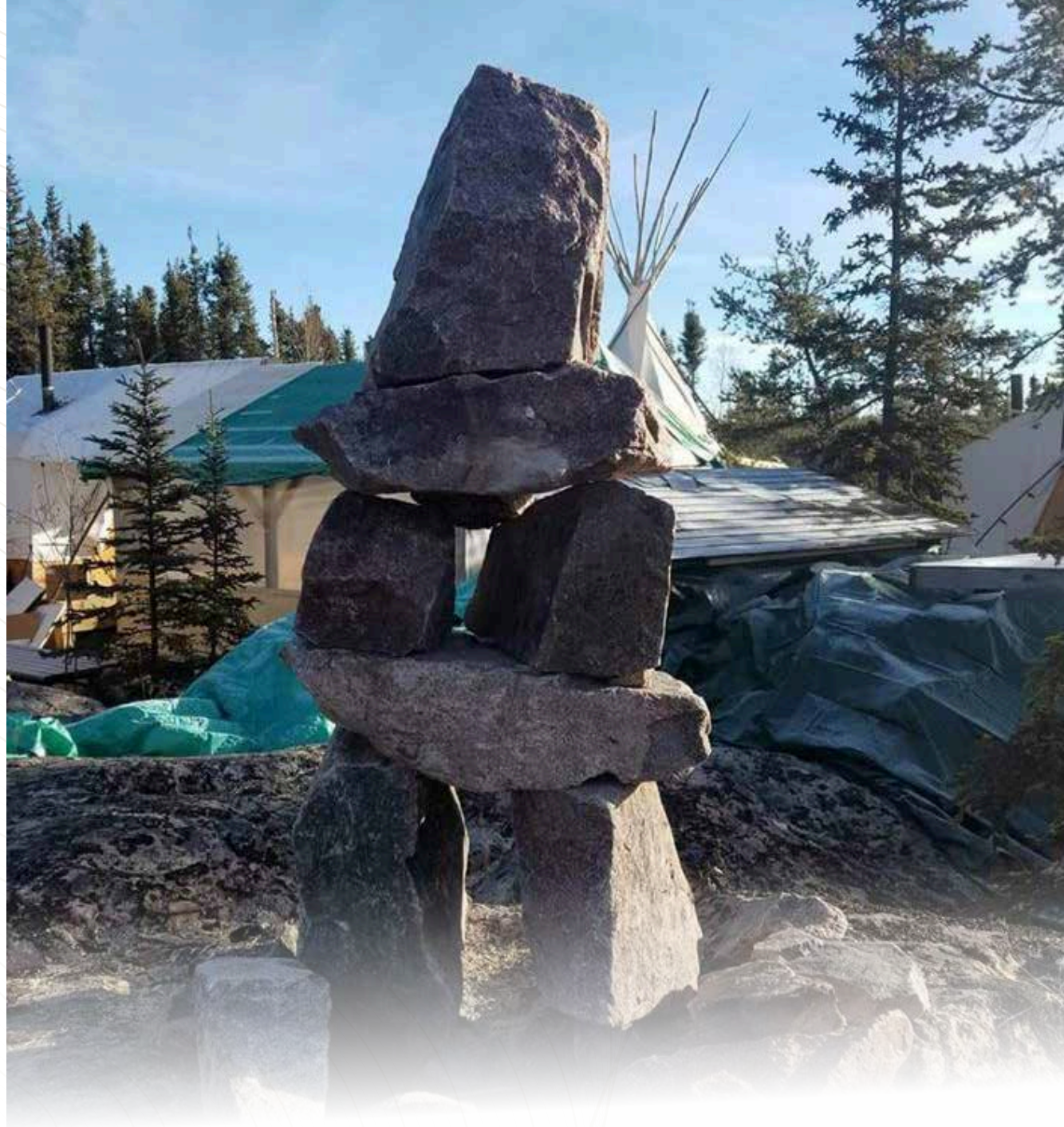
The city of Yellowknife has approached us to join the homelessness strategy that seeks to address housing, social supports, and addictions treatment. Our Executive Director is currently a member of the Homelessness Strategy Committee. We are hopeful that growing collaborations will allow us to help more people. We have also been approached by a funding agency to provide wellness activities and family programs for the Yellowknife area. This partnership will bring funding to facilitate more programming and activities. As a result, we will be able to attend more community events such as sharing circles, counseling sessions at the women's shelter, and work with inmates at the jail.

We received funding through the Northwest Territories SPOR unit to run a full-scale evaluation of our program and develop measurement tools for future work. In partnership with an evaluation organization, Hotsii ts'eeda and the Tlicho Government, we have used the funds to hire one of the only Indigenous evaluators in Canada. We began the evaluation process at the end of March and have developed evaluation forms for the camp, community events, and programs we

run outside of the camp. We have started using these forms effective April 1, 2019; they will help ensure we are meeting our goals for individuals and the community we serve. Our evaluation process will also help us create an innovative tool that could be used widely in the evaluation of these types of programs.

We are proud of our urban land camp; however, we are mindful that our lease with the City of Yellowknife is only temporary. Thus, we are currently in the process of switching gears to start transitioning to our permanent site. We have hosted two visioning sessions for the wellness center building. The sessions were very well attended, and we received great feedback from a number of community members. We are hoping to have our report, drawings and models finalized by June 2019 and are looking forward to beginning construction of the permanent healing center with our sought after support from government. We are proactively preparing for the transition in order to ensure our programming runs smoothly in the background and none of our clients fall through the cracks.

While we remain quiet, somewhat in the background, we are busy ensuring a better place for northerners. We want to use our camp to continue to distribute the impact of the Arctic Inspiration Prize throughout the North.

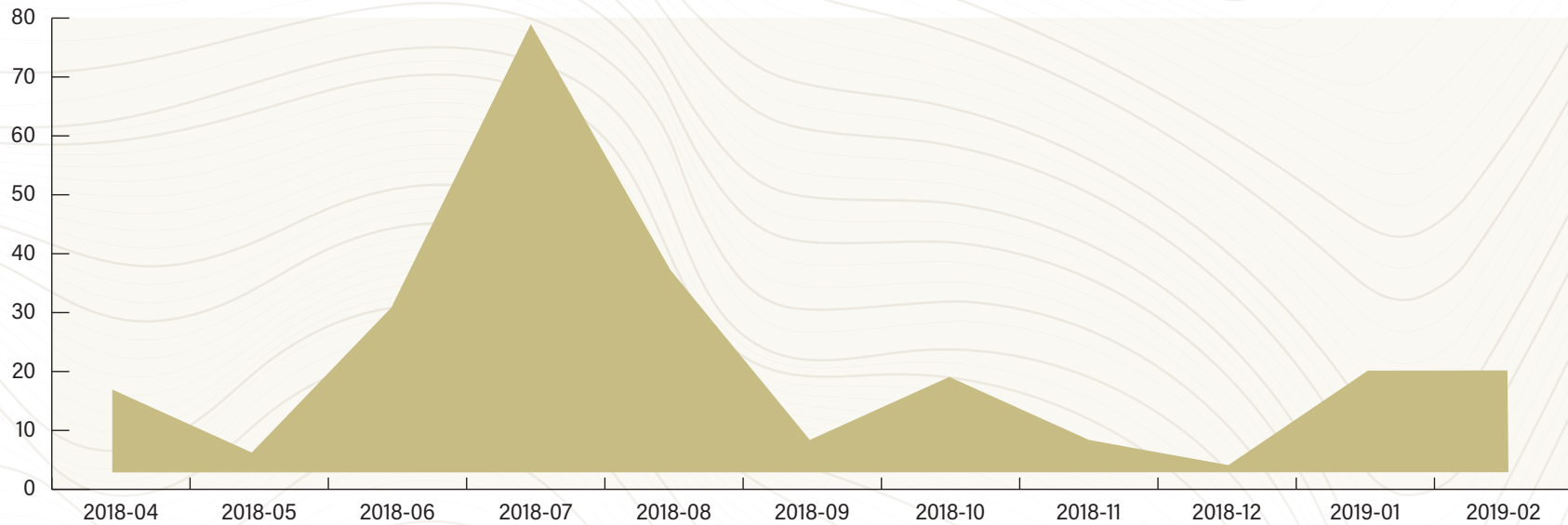


Appendix:

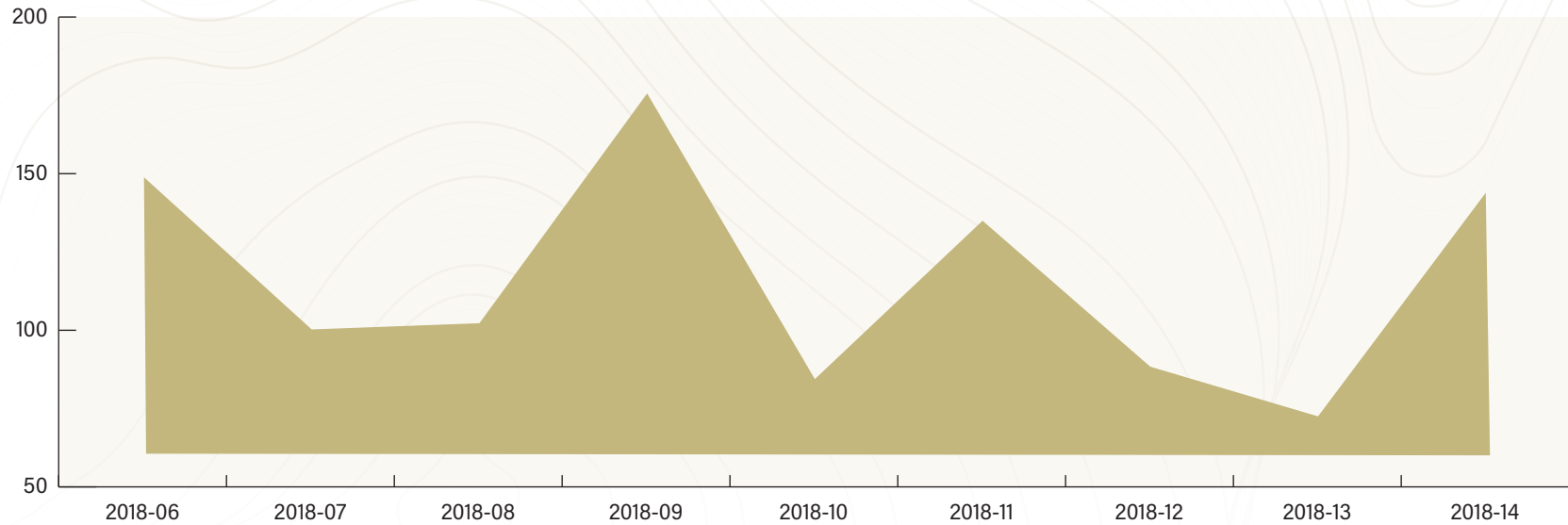
AIWF Social Events Attendance 2018-2019

	Female			Male			Other/ Unknown		Total
	<18	Adult	Total	<18	Adult	Total	<18	Total	
Sept 2018		41	41		22	22	16	16	79
Oct 2018	16	36	52	4	31	35			87
Nov 2018		32	32		61	61	25	25	118
Dec 2018	21	41	62	20	25	45			107
Jan 2019	21	51	72	21	31	52			124
Feb 2019		11	11		20	20			31
Mar 2019	21	21	42	21	61	81			123
Total	79	233	312	65	251	316	41	41	669

Number of Client Visits



Number of Visits Recorded in Guestbook



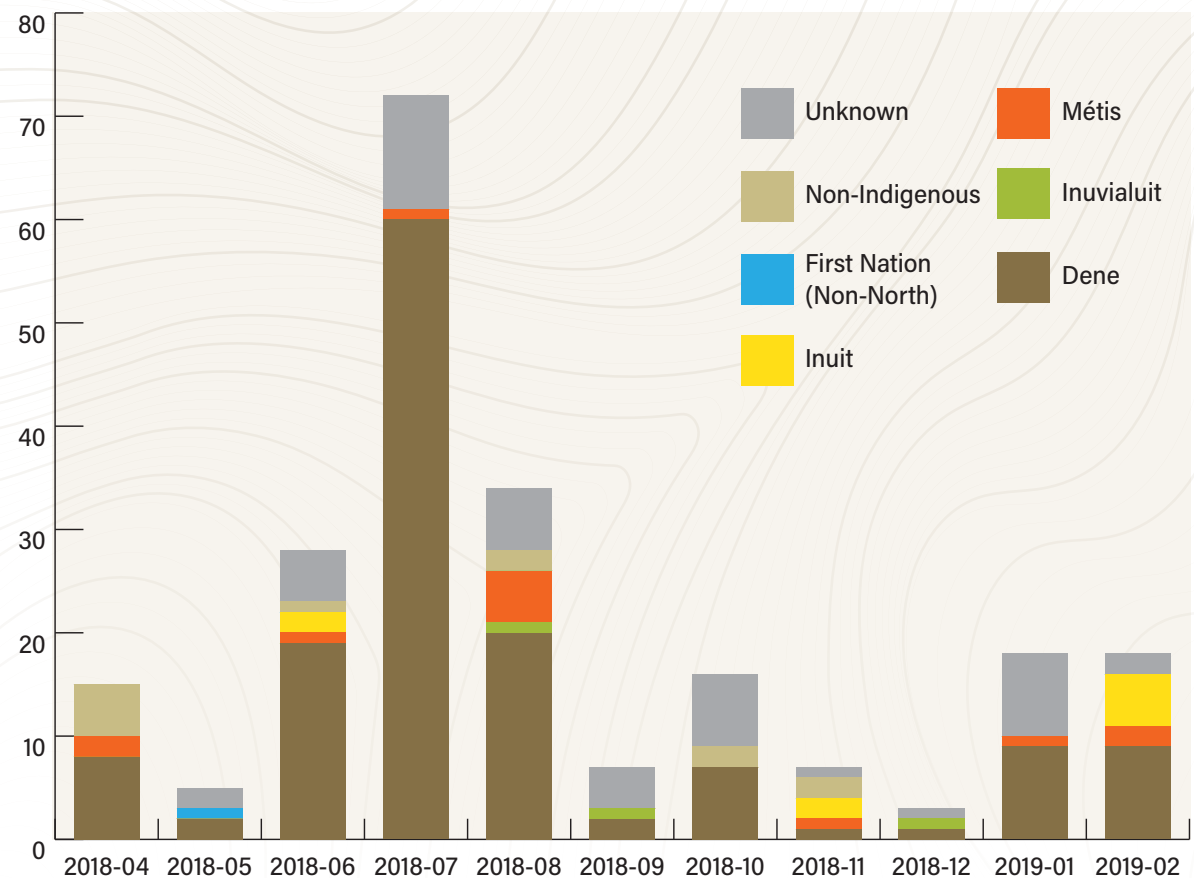
Who is visiting the camp?

Clients primarily were from the Northwest Territories but indicated being from a wide range of communities. Additionally, clients included an even representation of genders with 50 percent male, 49 percent female, and 1 percent gender X, as well as an even age distribution as per the graph below.

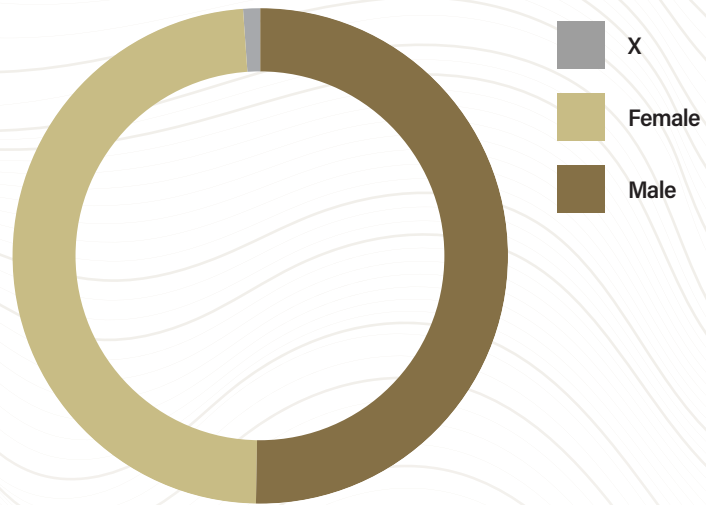
Some clients volunteered their ethnicity:

Community	Percent of Clients (%)
Alberta	1.21
Arviat	0.61
Baker Lake	0.61
Behchoko	0.61
Calgary	0.61
Deline	1.21
Dettah	4.85
Fort Good Hope	1.21
Fort McPherson	1.82
Fort Smith	1.21
Gjoa Haven	0.61
Inuvik	0.61
Kugluktuk	0.61
Lutselk'e	1.82
N'dilo	4.24
Saskatchewan	1.82
Taloyoak	0.61
Trout Lake	0.61
Unknown	74.55
USA	0.61
Yellowknife	10.30

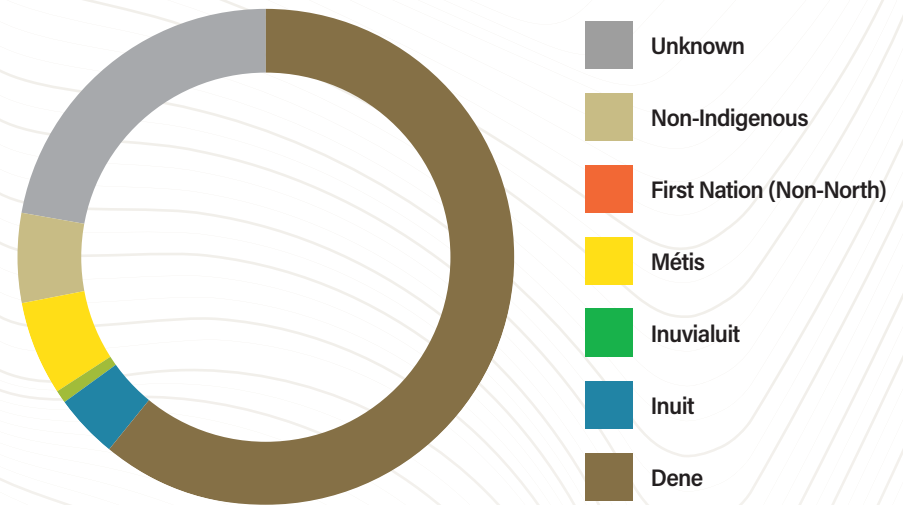
Number of Client Visits



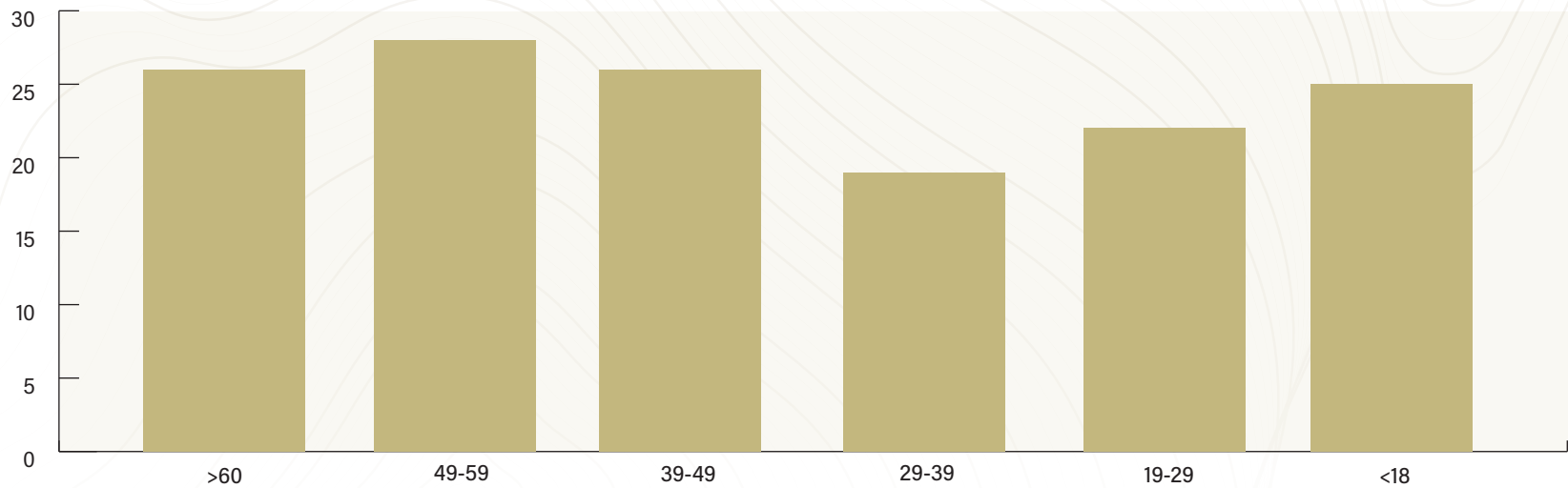
Client Gender



Client Ethnicity



AIWF Client Age Groups



AIWF in the News

If you would like to learn more about us and our work, we encourage you to check out the following links!

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/2018-arctic-inspiration-prize-1.4513445>

<http://www.gov.nt.ca/newsroom/news/gnwt-congratulates-arctic-indigenous-wellness-foundation-winning-1-million-arctic>

<https://nwtwellnesssociety.ca/2017-presenters/>

<https://cabinradio.ca/5244/news/good-news/nwt-winners-of-1-million-prize-promise-a-brighter-future/>

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/wellness-on-the-land-land-based-approaches-for-healing-and-learning-tickets-46019635970>

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/work-begins-on-urban-on-the-land-healing-camp-in-yellowknife/ar-AAvKKcR>

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/elder-emotional-opening-land-wellness-143929071.html>

<http://www.rcinet.ca/regard-sur-arctique/2018/03/09/rassi-nashalik-le-premier-visage-de-la-television-du-grand-nord-canadien/>

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/a-la-une/document/nouvelles/article/1087219/rassi-nashalik-femme-autochtone-igalaaq>

<http://calendaryellowknife.ca/Document/View/1480d19d-cebb-4d43-a967-a8cf00c9a6c1>

<http://aptnnews.ca/2018/04/24/on-the-land-healing-centre-opens-in-yellowknife/>

<http://aptnnews.ca/2018/04/14/aptn-news-saturday-new-healing-centre-in-yellowknife-located-exactly-where-it-will-work-best-in-the-bush/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ArcticIndigenousWellnessFoundation/www.arcticindigenouswellness.org>

<https://uphere.ca/UpHereMagazine-2018June>

<https://www.nnsl.com/nwtnewsnorth/early-days-a-success-for-on-the-land-camp/>

<https://www.nnsl.com/arts/when-the-heart-says-no-wellness-camp-opens-in-yk/>

<https://www.nnsl.com/opinion/reconciliation-health-healing-north/>

<https://www.facebook.com/CBC.caIndigenous/videos/519425128559055/?t=0>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/cannabis-psychosis-hospitalizations-increased-1.4877853>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nwt-government-looks-to-improve-aftercare-1.4683347>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/better-measures-for-indigenous-community-well-being-needed-1.4684247>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/children-of-survivors-lloyd-thrasher-1.4876227>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/homeless-yellowknife-solutions-ideas-1.4651839>

https://soundcloud.com/cklbradio/georges-story-addiction-recovery-and-the-importance-of-support?fbclid=IwAR0tz56bDJ2v7z4RIGGHZaK9_78bjp-deDMA1ey9Jsh1R3WXUY_1vtD_8

<https://cklbradio.com/arctic-indigenous-wellness-foundation-carrying-the-torch-for-wellness-centre/?fbclid=IwAR0CZ6gVEVzWg1Upj1RTCS6amSZ32K1oxDdA4KO4M9IYVKq3VMtaRNOU5aM>





**ARCTIC
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WELLNESS
FOUNDATION**

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